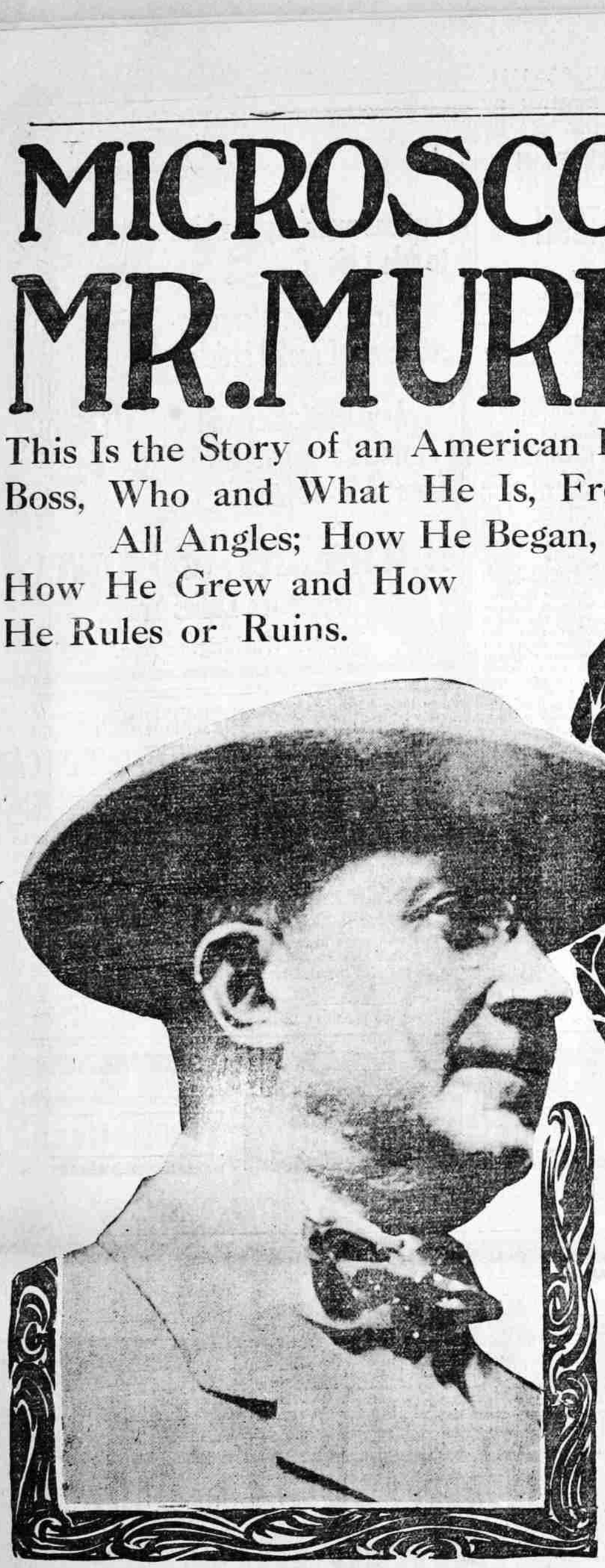
MICROSCOPING MR. MURPHY

This Is the Story of an American Political Boss, Who and What He Is, From All Angles; How He Began, How He Grew and How He Rules or Ruins.



Charles F. Murphy, Boss of Tammany Hall, at left; William Sulzer in circle; Mrs. Sulzer in lower picture.

Every night in thousands of American cities, towns and villages the oldest daughter will pause for a moment at the supper table and say: "Ma, can't we go to the movies tonight?"

And in a large percentage of these cases pa, who is sitting at the foot of the supper table, will dig down in his pocket for the money to pay the freight. It is a big business, this moving picture industry, and already it has created its many millionaires, its moving pcture trusts and combines and its periodical literature. For magazines and weekly publications there are which deal with nothing but the picture industry and the players employed in it.

But there is a new side of the "movies"—the educational side. For a time the moving pictures were good teachers of geography. That was in the beginning. Then they began to teach ornithology, in time biology and other sciences, and before very long they were teaching government to large audiences each day.

No matter where you happeh to be living this week or next week, or the week after, you are very likely to see in the moving pictures some of the scenes from the trial of Mr. Sulzer, who until recently was the governor of New York State. And on the same film you will see pictures of Mr. Murphy, who was so much bigger than the governor of New York that he kicked the governor out of office when he got ready to do so.

Scenes the "Movies" Do Not Show—Yet.

Now, Mr. Sulzer, as you doubtless know, turned out to be a faithless governor who did in office things he should not have done, and for which he should have been ousted. But that is not why Mr. Sulzer was ousted.

He was kicked out of office because Charles F. Murphy, the boss of the corrupt Tammany organization in New York City, wanted him ousted; because Murphy threatened to oust him and quickly made good his threat.

Thereupon a good deal of attention focuses upon Mr. Murphy of Tammany. Doubtless you would like to know about Mr. Murphy, who is stronger than all other New York politicians—and stronger, even, than public sentiment in New York City and State combined.

Who is Murphy? What is Murphy? What environment produced him? How does he rule? Or, rather, as they say in New York: "Why is Murphy?"

All of these, you may be sure, are very interesting questions. The next time you see a moving picture in a theatre showing Governor Sulzer walking down the capitol steps at Albany do not stop there and think that you have seen all of the picture.

On the contrary, close your eyes tight and look upon this picture, which will now unfold itself.

First you will see a picture of a crowd of rough-looking men and boys, their coat collars turned up, the visors of their caps pulled over their eyes, the caps well atilt on the side of their heads. This organization is the one known in the criminal history of New York as the "Gas House Gang"—a band of marauders and brawlers, numbering within its ranks gun-men, pickpockets, thieves. The record book at police headquarters in New York will give you a list of the gang's activities.

Organized Political Baseball Teams.

Mr. Murphy, the boss of Tammany, who ousted Sulzer through his courts and his legislature, was graduated from the Gas House Gang. From that environment he became a bartender. He was a handy man in Barney Curtin's saloon at First avenue and Seventh street, and in this great saloon home of politicians-in-the-making he organized two political baseball teams; the "Senators" and the "Sylvians," who played politics a good deal more than they played baseball. The personnel of what was being made into a political gang made it typical of those organizations in many large cities known as "repeaters," "floaters"—of those organized bodies that vote many times in elections though they are not registered and have no right to vote.

But Barney Curtin's saloon did not provide Murphy with sufficient revenues and he became a driver of one of the old cross-town horse cars, which even now are made the subject of jest by the wise rural persons from the provinces who still visit New York to learn for themselves of the simplicity and gullibility of the dwellers in our biggest city. By day Mr. Murphy drove his horse car, and no one has ever questioned his competency. By night he organized his political forces in the Twelfth election district of the Eighteenth Assembly district, and in course of time accumulated from these two sources enough money to finance a saloon of his own. Before he had owned his little hole-in-the-wall saloon two years he had been made district captain by the powers that were in Tammany.

In 1888 he owned three saloons and was a power in his district. Silent, alert, never absent from his district, every evening present at his "Anawanda Club," which he organized as the local Tammany organization, Murphy's power came to be recognized at "The Hall," which is the home of Tammany.

In the early part of his career Murphy formed business relations which have been continued ever since and which have formed the basis of his fortune—now popularly estimated to be several million dollars. Murphy gathered in a fourth saloon in 1891, and at the same time acquired a building at Twenty-seventh street and Seventh avenue, which for a number of years was run under the name of "The Borough."

During Mayor Low's administration "The Borough" was regularly under police surveillance. Then, under Mayor Van Wyck, Murphy was made Dock Commissioner and transferred the title of his saloons to others.

One Source of His Fortune Is Shown.

The day he went out of office as Dock Commissioner Murphy formed with James E. Gaffney and Richard J. Couch the New York Contracting and Trucking Company, which leased two piers on the East river.

The total rent paid to the City of New York for the two valuable pier properties was $4,800 a year. William Hepburn Russell, the Commissioner of Accounts under Mayor Low, showed in a public report that the average profit from the two properties was $200 a day, a rate of 5,000 per cent on the investment and that in five weeks the receipts of the company for the use of the dock properties had amounted to $5,005.

But these profits, though large and excessive and at the expense of the people of New York, the real owners of the municipal piers, constituted but a small part of Murphy's profits. He was both a politician and a contractor, as we see. Therefore we find him doing large work for such corporations as the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Consolidated Gas Company of New York.

Each and all of these corporations and others constantly were asking for franchises from the New York Board of Aldermen and what could be more natural than that they should establish friendly relations with the Aldermen by employing Mr. Murphy to do their contracting work, especially when you remember that Mr. Murphy and his Tammany friends owned the members of the Board of Aldermen and put them in office with the thousands of legitimate and other thousands of fraudulent Tammany votes.

None of these corporations with large contracts at their disposal had to bribe, buy, cajole or attempt to bribe aldermen. All that they had to do was to "be good to Mr. Murphy." And examination of some of the greater pieces of contracting work in New York in the last ten years will reveal that Mr. Murphy and his partners performed them at great profit to themselves.

Already Rich When He Became Leader.

By 1902, when he became leader of Tammany Hall—so that judges, officials and both large and small fry called him "Chief"—Murphy had become a rich man, but he had carefully concealed his wealth and lived in a modest house at 305 East Seventeenth street. With the leadership securely in his grasp Murphy at once acquired a large and valuable estate at Good Ground, Long Island, and purchased the house at 309 East Seventeenth street, two doors from his former modest home. He assembled a kennel of bulldogs, bought diamonds and automobiles and began to take on flesh until he looked just as the cartoonists of this day depict him.

And there you have a picture of Charles F. Murphy, a very moving picture indeed. You may see for yourself what sort of man rules New York City and New York State, tho latter through his upstate lieutenants. Reformers inveigh against him and what he stands for, preachers sermonize against the kind of government they get from his hand-picked candidates, and at the very next election they get more candidates elected of the very same sort.

Mr. Murphy and the things he stands for in government constitute a large and conspicuous evil. For the old statement that Murphy not only was stronger than the arms of the state and city government, but actually was and is the government has been proved by his ousting of William Sulzer. The fact is, that before Sulzer was pitched head first out of office very few innocents doubted Mr. Murphy's ability to do so whenever he passed the word down the line to his judges and other political tools.

When the moving pictures in this city have supplied you with a reel-life-real-life drama in part you yourself are now able to supply the other part of the drama and the part that you supply is by all odds the most interesting part.